

THE BAPTIST Record

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Tornado slams Central Hills Retreat

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

John Price got his wish for an exciting celebration to mark the beginning of 2011, but it wasn't quite the way he was expecting.

Price, pastor of First Church, Charleston, was attending the annual New Year's Eve staff reunion at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko. Price, who served on the first Central Hills staff in 1979, and about 23 other former staffers and family members had just brought in the new year at Carey Lodge with fireworks and root beer when a powerful EF-2 tornado made a direct hit on the Mississippi Baptist encampment just minutes after midnight.

"We had lined up for a group photo when the lights went off. That was the first indication of a problem," Price said. "We rushed into the bathrooms, which are in the interior of the buildings and had stalls for support in case the ceiling came down. It didn't take long for the tornado to pass over, but we heard glass breaking and the building was creaking loudly."

Price said his ears popped as the tornado passed over, much like the feeling of being in an airliner that is changing altitudes. "I was a little disappointed I didn't hear the locomotive sound, though. I've always heard stories about that," he said.

When they came out of the bathrooms, Price said, they couldn't see any damage in the pitch dark of the Attala County night. "I made my way to my suitcase in another room to get the flashlight I had packed, and I felt broken glass on top of the suitcase. That's when I knew there was damage."



MAJOR DAMAGE — Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force units work on New Year's Day to remove debris from the old administration building at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko after an EF-2 tornado raked the Mississippi Baptist encampment minutes into the new year and caused substantial damage to almost every structure. No injuries were reported although approximately 24 people rode out the quick-moving storm in Carey Lodge at the encampment. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Carey Lodge sustained substantial damage, with exterior walls ripped from the concrete foundation and sections of missing roof allowing the torrential rains to pour into the building.

"We checked to be sure everyone was accounted for. We let the storm pass — it was still raining hard after the tornado passed

over — and then we gathered up our stuff and moved to Curtis Lodge next door, which was not as heavily damaged," he said.

The group was forced to spend the remainder of the night at Curtis Lodge due to the large trees that had fallen across the roads. They departed for home shortly after chainsaw crews cut a narrow path out of the encampment early on the morning of New Year's Day.

"We were blessed. I feel bad for the people who died in the storm in Arkansas and Alabama, and I thank the Lord for His mercy on us. We were very blessed," Price said.

Central Hills camp manager Jim Ray, also a former staffer, was at Carey Lodge for the reunion when the tornado struck. He said because of debris and downed power lines that were still energized, it took him more than 45 minutes to make the short walk down the hill from Carey Lodge to the main portion of the camp.

Ray said power has been restored to a significant portion of the facility, and cleanup is moving quickly. Blue tarps have been placed over damaged roofs and timber has been removed from roadways.

"There's access to all the campground now, and we're in the process of repairing numerous water line breaks. We're doing damage assessments right now," he said.

Ray is determined to reopen the camp as soon as possible. "We're going to be able to meet our schedule beginning in March. We will conduct our full schedule of summer activities, for sure," he said.

Central Hills Retreat was opened in 1979, after Hurricane Camille wiped out Camp Kittiwake on the coast a decade earlier and created a need for more camping space. More than 5,500 first-time professions of faith have been recorded there.



SURVEYING LOSS — Jim Futral (right), executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), and Barri Shirley, MBCB associate executive director for business services, assess the damage to Cole's Creek Lodge at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko after a New Year's Day tornado caused major damage at the Mississippi Baptist encampment. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

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What the world needs in 2011

When the Berlin Wall came down 22 years ago last month, the world rejoiced. The vast concrete and barbed wire scar running for miles across the German countryside, so vividly symbolic of the great divide between rival ideologies, was no more. The old Soviet Union quickly crumbled and millions of people breathed free for the first time.

Liberty had triumphed at last and a Pax Americana would soon engulf the world, we were told. Many historians even referred to the coming era as "the end of history." They were wrong.

Even though communism, the great enemy of our way of life, and its harsh dictatorships have faded away in many parts of the world, new threats have arisen in its place to test our mettle. Thus it has always been, and thus it will be. History has not ended, as we euphorically believed only a few short years ago. Quite the contrary.

The evil one, the father of confusion and strife and misery and death, would have it no other way.

Since those heady days of the late 80s and early 90s, we have witnessed genocide on a scale not seen for more than a half-century. Tribal conflicts in the African nations of Rwanda and Burundi resulted in the slaughter of millions of innocent men, women, and children. The Balkans erupted in flames over centuries-old grievances, and mass graves are still being uncovered.

An especially cruel war raged in the Russian state of Chechnya, with schoolchildren and other civilians paying a high price. In

the Darfur region of Sudan, massive destruction of life is occurring with apparent government sanction. North Koreans have resorted to eating grass to avoid starvation — that is, the North Koreans who have somehow avoided that country's Stalinist gulag system.

Many other areas of the world are a powder keg, waiting for the fuse to be lit. Anyone who remotely doubts the presence of the Devil and his evil schemes in the workings of this world must have his/her head in the sand. He is real, and he roams among us seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

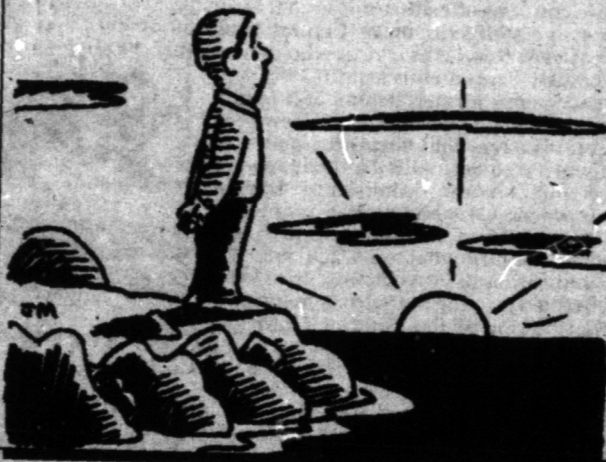
What the world needs in 2011 is what it has always needed: Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world. It just seems that the world needs Jesus more and more with every passing year.

If the world knew Jesus in 2011 like we know Jesus, the Tutsis and Hutus would join together in brotherhood. Chechens and Russians would put aside their political differences for a far greater cause. Warring factions in Sudan would seek the Heavenly Father, not more artillery. North Koreans would have hope, and all the ethnic groups in the Balkans would gather in friendship to raise one voice in praise to the Light of the world.

The only way all of that will ever happen is if those people know Christ. The only way those people will ever know Christ is through the witness of Christians. It's that simple (Matthew 28:18-20). If not us, then who?

The historians in 1989 were right about one thing — history will end. They're just off on the date by a little bit. If 2011 is the year, may our returning Lord say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21)

"DEAR LORD, I HAVEN'T
DONE A VERY GOOD JOB LATELY
OF TELLING YOU HOW IMPRESSED
I AM WITH YOUR ARTISTRY."



GUEST OPINION:

Stop selfishness in its tracks

By Rebecca Hagelin
Arlington, Va.



I'm afraid they're becoming really selfish," my friend said. "My two girls fight over everything, from what movie they're going to watch, to who gets the [Nintendo] Wii first. I don't know what to do about it."

Children's squabbles are part of parenting, for sure. Sometimes they're a sign of tired bodies, surging hormones, or natural orneriness — but other times, they're a flashing beacon that something more is at work: selfishness.

Our culture offers so much, materially, that it's easy for our children (and for us, too) to take for granted how much we really have. We stop noticing all that we do have in our endless quest for what we don't have. We forget to consider what our lives would be like without the gifts — people, talents, possessions, opportunities — that already have been given to us.

The antidote? Gratitude. Researchers have found that people who cultivate the habit of gratitude reap all sorts of benefits, from better health, to greater happiness, to stronger relationships.

For adolescents, gratitude is a vital piece not only for character formation, but also for day-to-day perspective. A recent study by researchers at

several leading universities reports that children who show more gratitude experience less envy and depression.

Conversely, children who rank higher on materialism experience less happiness and struggle more with grades and contentment.

Back to the squabbling sisters. What will help them change course? How can parents cultivate gratitude instead of envy and discontent?

First, set limits. When selfishness is a problem, parents need to limit their children's constant access to entertainment, diversions, trendy possessions, and fleeting "wants" — at least for a time.

Materialism grows where material possessions abound and when there are few limits on when and how often they will be enjoyed.

It's not that these possessions — amazing electronic advances like the iPad or elementary school fads like "Silly Bandz" — are bad in themselves. They are not, but our children's vision quickly becomes nearsighted, focused only on what's in front of their own noses.

Then they want more of it and they don't want others to have it, lest they feel like they've "lost" something. Multiply that attitude by a dozen beloved possessions, and you've got the makings of a selfish child. So, pare down and limit.

Second, start a daily exercise in which whining children (or parents) write down things for which they are thankful. Researchers have found that the simple act of keeping a "gratitude journal" increases happiness and wellbeing.

When we have to stop and think about what we are grateful for, and write it down daily, we reduce the tendency to take our things, talents, and friendships for granted. We appreciate the good in our lives more deeply.

Third, encourage humility. Robert Emmons, one of the premier researchers on happiness and gratitude, emphasizes it's not enough to be grateful, in the abstract, for the good things in our lives. We need to be grateful to someone. We need to look outside ourselves and acknowledge our dependency on others — particularly God — for the source of goodness in our lives.

Make it a daily practice to thank God for His goodness and blessings, and to thank those around us for their kindness, generosity and friendship. Let's start with a humble acknowledgement of the good in our lives and a vow that we will always remember that all good flows from the hands of the One who created us — and that He is worthy of our thanks and praise.

Hagelin, the mother of three, is a pro-family advocate, speaker, and author. Her latest book is *30 Ways in 30 Days to Save Your Family*. Sign up for her e-newsletter at www.howtosaveyourfamily.com. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Death toll rises from Christmas terrorism

JOS, Nigeria (BP) — Tensions mounted in two Nigerian cities in late December as sectarian bloodshed left 80 dead, including a Baptist pastor and two church members. Dozens of others have been seriously injured.

Violence erupted on Christmas Eve when militants of the outlawed Islamic sect Boko Haram attacked two churches in the northern Nigerian city of Maiduguri. Jihadists belonging to another Muslim sect set off a series of bombs in the city of Jos.

Bulus Marwa, pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Maiduguri, was dragged from his residence, shot, and killed after two choir members rehearsing for a late-night carol service were hacked to death inside the church.

Two passersby also were killed and the church building was set ablaze. At a nearby Church of Christ, a security guard was killed and 25 people injured by bomb blasts when Boko Haram members stormed the church in two vehicles and detonated bombs.

In Jos, bombs exploded simul-

taneously on Christmas Eve in two Christian neighborhoods, hitting shopping centers, restaurants, and a Catholic church. The death toll there stands at 80, with 120 hospitalized. A previously unknown Islamic group claimed responsibility.

Since the Christmas Eve violence, 20 homes have been burned and two mosques and a church vandalized.

Maiduguri is the capital of Borno state and is predominantly Muslim. Jos is the capital of Plateau state. Borno's state governor, Ali Modu Sheriff, visited Victory Baptist Church on Christmas Day. He told those attending that the attacks on the Christian communities there and in Jos were an attempt to create conflict between Christians and Muslims.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom also condemned the attacks.

"It's obvious that Islamists are bent on giving us a black Christmas," said Timothy Olonade, executive secretary of the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association.

While several churches cancelled services on Christmas

Day because of the violence, many did meet, Olonade reported. "Those who threw bombs in the city and killed innocent people didn't expect us to gather in our churches, but we did," he said.

On Christmas Day, Olonade visited the sites of the bombings in Jos. "I went to one of the bombed spots," he said. "I saw bodies yet to be evacuated. I saw lots of soldiers all around, presumably guarding us and the city but alas, I remembered the Bible. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the uniformed men are mere decorations. Then I prayed for our land."

Christians in both cities have taken refuge to avoid further attacks while soldiers and police keep watch at churches and other Christian locations in the area. Southern Baptist missionaries living in Jos heard explosions and gunfire two miles from their home, where they had gathered with colleagues and friends for Christmas celebrations.

Later they saw houses on fire and a large military and police presence.

Nigeria has a history of sectarian violence. In January and

February of 2010, hundreds died in incidents throughout the country. In March, violence broke out in Jos when members of local Muslim and Christian communities fought each other in retaliation for previous killings.

Police said 109 people died, mostly women and children.

The country is unofficially divided between the Christian south and Muslim north. Jos lies in the center of the split. Since 2001, killings of both Muslims and Christians have plagued Jos, leaving more than 2,000 people dead.

"I don't mean to make Nigeria sound like a war zone because it is not," one missionary said. "Rather, I ask for prayers in the midst of difficult circumstances. It breaks my heart to know that there are people out there who do not know our Savior. Some of them don't want to know Him and even hate Him."

Even so, there are so many who would like to hear and are curious about the Gospel. I pray that many who see these radical actions will begin to understand that there has to be a better way."

Iraqi Christians gather for Christmas observances

BAGHDAD (BP) — About 300 Christians courageously gathered for a Christmas service at a church in Baghdad where Muslim extremists killed 68 people just two months earlier.

Photos of the dead church members stood before the altar and two black cassocks hung from the walls in honor of two murdered priests, the Associated Press reported Dec. 25. The walls of Our Lady of Salvation Church were pocked with bullet holes, and

sheets of plastic covered windows shattered in the attack.

Many Christmas celebrations were canceled because of security concerns, the AP noted. The assault on the church was followed by a string of bombings in Christian neighborhoods.

Before the war, Christians in Iraq numbered as high as 1.4 million, the AP reported, but Christian leaders now estimate as few as 400,000 remain. The exodus of Christians from the country has increased since the attack.

On Dec. 14, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called on the United States to "redouble its efforts" in helping protect Iraq's persecuted Christian community. On Dec. 21, a worldwide group of 90-plus legislators, declaring that Christians are rapidly becoming "extinct" in Iraq and other Middle East countries, called on President Obama to make protecting them a top priority.

Some of the Christians attending Christmas services, however, asserted their determination to remain in their country. Adiba Youssef, a 52-year-old woman who attended the service with her family, told a reporter, "I love my country. I buried my parents here. I can't leave it... We believe in God, and he will protect us."

Some observers believe the goal of the Muslim terrorists targeting Christians is to hasten the extinction of Christianity in the country.

Laith Amir said, "The church was baptized by the blood of the martyrs. [The attack] gave us more motivation to come to the church and to celebrate Christmas in spite of what has happened to us."

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki condemned efforts to drive Christians out of the country, the AP reported.

"The attempts to keep Christians away from their homeland and their land, which clung to them through the centuries, is a great crime against national unity," al-Maliki said in a statement on his website Saturday marking the Christmas holiday.

Some observers believe the goal of the Muslim terrorists targeting Christians is to hasten the extinction of Christianity in the country.

Looking back

10 years ago

Funding for ministries, from Hispanic work to helping widows with home repairs, to food pantries, is available from the Associational Missions Response Fund, part of the \$251,493 Mississippi Cooperative Program budget for 2001.

20 years ago

Hepzibah Church, Silver Creek, holds a special service for members of the church who are also National Guard members facing imminent mobilization as the standoff with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein continues to worsen. They are given a New Testament and prayers are offered for their safety.

50 years ago

The town of Sturgis held a Christmas program at Sturgis Church Dec. 18, on the theme of Portraits of the Madonnas. Living reproductions of famous Madonna portraits included The Blue Madonna, Mother Adoring the Child, and The Sistine Madonna.



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THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

BIBLIOPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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NATHTPVHT MT SHT
GOHETW MENA AED GJ
GSKNELD ECVN
WTSNA; NASN YEFT SL
XAHENL MSL HSELTW
OK PHVD NAT WTSW GJ
NAT RYVHJ VP NAT
PSNATH, TQTC LV MT
SYLV LAVOYW MSYF EC
CTMCTLL VP YEPT.
HVDSCLEU: PVOH

Clue: P = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Six: Twenty-seven

COVERING MISSISSIPPI IN PRAYER

Covering Mississippi in Prayer will be an experience of thousands of people every morning before 8 o'clock gathering before God's throne praying for special needs in their lives, their area of responsibility and influence, and the thoughts that God places in our hearts as we pray for His Kingdom work around the world. In January, February, and March, I will have the privilege of being at 90 of the Prayer Rallies that are going to be held at county seats all across our state. I am confident that those moments together in each one of those places will not just be a gathering and not just be a publicity stunt but will call attention to the urgent and powerful attention of the people of God to be praying. It is not just praying for Mississippi, though that will take place. It is about Mississippians praying.

The journey across the state to these prayer gatherings began Monday, January 3, and will continue through Tuesday, March 29. While we will be praying for ourselves to find a relationship with God that is both cleansing and encouraging, we will also be praying for the leaders of towns and counties. We will be praying that there will be many precious souls that will come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. These are not just one-time momentary events. There will be other prayer emphases in our churches and in our associations that can be life changing, church renewing, and make an impact on our communities.

One aspect of the gathering of thousands each morning is to pray before 8 o'clock each day. Why pray before 8 o'clock each morning? Clearly, there is



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Prayer Points

nothing magical about 8 o'clock, but there is something wonderful about beginning your day with God. While some people may head off to work at 4 o'clock, others are trying to get the kids to school before seven or 8 o'clock, and the importance is not to rush off into the hurriedness and the worriedness of the day without talking to the One who knows every turn and every way of the entire day. It can change the way you begin the day and it will bring a clear awareness that everything that is happening throughout the day whether it is with the kids or the career, whether it is dealing with some major issue that you have been focused on, or a surprise that rocks your world. Listen carefully and read attentively this verse, Mark 1:35, which describes Jesus. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Just think about that. Before Jesus was immersed into all of the opportunities and challenges the day might hold, before He was engaged in conversations with others, before He would teach, preach, or be faced with soul-searching questions, and

before He would field those trick questions that seemed to have no answers, He spent time with the Father in prayer.

If He felt a great need to face the day covered with prayer, you and I can benefit many times over from doing likewise. You do not know what the day ahead holds for you, but He does. You may not have all of the answers and certainly may not have all of the strength that you need for things that you face but He does, and so each day as you Cover Mississippi in Prayer begin it early with the God who cares about you and everything that you face. Spend time with the loving Father who will walk with you every step and every second through the day. With that in mind, you can live in confidence with a peaceful heart and with the promise of God

that He is going to walk with you and indeed, He will guide you without fail.

Dr. John Ed Mathison tells the story of a lady who was visiting his church on Mother's Day. They recognized the oldest mother present in the service and though she was a visitor, she was the oldest mom there. To honor her they presented her with a devotional book that was a 365-day devotional guide. She graciously received it and shortly thereafter went back to her home. Later in that same year in December she died. She went on to be with the Father and the family in her heavenly home. When they found her, she was seated at her little breakfast table. She had gotten up that morning, made herself a cup of coffee, drank her coffee, and on the table was the devotional guide turned to that day. She had read that day's word of encouragement and prayed. Then at 95, she had eaten a piece of chocolate and left on her long and lovely journey to the Father's house. We never know what a day may hold or the next 15 minutes may have in store for us, but what a peaceful, joyful thing it is to meet Him in the morning and walk with Him all day.

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Graham reflects on his life, what he'd like to do over

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Billy Graham granted his first interview in several years Dec. 20, telling Fox News' Greta Van Susteren that if he could do it over again, he would spend less time traveling and more time in meditation and prayer.

The renowned evangelist, now 92, spoke to Van Susteren just before meeting former U.S. President George W. Bush and his wife Laura, along with Graham's son Franklin and his wife Jane, for lunch in Charlotte, N.C.

The Bushes were at the Billy Graham Library to sign copies of their autobiographies. Van Susteren asked Graham if he has hope, and Graham said he has a tremendous amount of hope because he is a believer in Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead and "is alive right now."

"My wife is already in heaven. I look forward to seeing her definitely in the near future because I'm 92 now and I know that my time is limited on this earth," Graham said, "but I have tremendous hope in the fact I'll be in the future life and I'll be there because of what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross and by the resurrection, and this gives me a great deal of hope."

If Graham had the opportunity to live his life over again, he said there are things he would do differently.

"I would study more. I would pray more, travel less, take less speaking engagements. I took too many of them in too many places around the world," he said.

"If I had it to do over again, I'd spend more time in meditation and prayer and just telling the Lord how much I love Him and adore Him and [am] looking forward the time we're going to spend together for eternity."

Van Susteren inquired about what age Graham realized he

wanted to be a preacher, and he said it was around age 18 or 19 when he was a student at a Bible school near Tampa.

"I used to walk the streets in this area that had completely disintegrated because of the Depression at that time, and I would pray and I would ask God for a direction for my life and for the genuine purpose of my life — what am I here for?" Graham recounted.

He said one night at a nearby golf course, as he was lying on the 18th green amid the palm trees, he heard God's call.

"The Lord seemed to call me and say that I was to preach the Gospel and from that time on, I began to prepare," Graham said. "By preparation, I mean I began to read books which contributed to what I would say in the years to come, and then I began to realize that my job was to try to win over people to Christ, which I did privately and publicly, which became eventually my sermons that we call evangelism."

Over the years, as he spoke to millions, he was surprised by the numbers who gathered to hear his message, Graham said.

He noted a particular engagement in Seoul, Korea, the largest audience he ever had.

They were just spread out as far as you could see, in a great plaza along the river," he said.

Graham passed along some advice to young preachers. "Spend more time in study and prayer. That's the secret of successful evangelism," he said. "If you neglect that, you've neglected the very heart of God's call to you."

With Christmas approaching, Graham said the holiday means "a great deal" to him, and his wife "always made a big thing of Christmas for the children."

"We all looked forward to it. We would get up on Christmas morning and have our prayers, and then we would sit under the tree and open our presents, usually on Christmas morning, sometimes on Christmas Eve," Graham said, "but when I looked into the crib or the manger and saw that little baby who was going to rise to become the greatest teacher that ever lived, to die on the cross for my sins, to know that I'll be forgiven because of what He was doing, it



GRAHAM SPEAKS — Billy Graham gave his first interview in several years Dec. 20 when he spoke to Fox News' Greta Van Susteren about his relationship with the Bush family, his hope for the future, and the meaning of Christmas. (BP photo)

absolutely transformed Christmas for me," he said.

"All the shopping and the gifts and all the things we celebrated [at] Christmas, it's a spiritual time. It's a time that strengthens my faith and gives me courage for the future. And I don't expect to live that much longer, but I do remember that every Christmas strengthened my faith as I came along."

Also in the interview, Van Susteren asked about Graham's relationship with the Bush family, and Graham recalled that he first met George W. Bush's grandfather, U.S. Senator Prescott Bush, in Florida and then was invited by Bush's grandmother to answer biblical questions and pray with a group of neighbors in her home.

"She was one of the sweetest women I think I ever met, a very deep Christian, and she became a wonderful friend to me and through her, I began to meet the rest of the family," Graham said of Dorothy Walker Bush.

Former U.S. President George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara "became very close friends to Ruth and me," Graham said, and it was during a visit to their retreat in Kennebunkport, Maine, in 1985 that he met their son George.

Graham had been asked to conduct a Bible study for the family, and Bush stood up to ask questions. Later the evangelist and the future president went on walks and played tennis together.

"I remember he was very interested in spiritual things and he asked a lot of very deep questions about the Bible and about the Christian faith, and I tried to answer as best I could," Graham told Van Susteren.

After lunch with Graham, George W. Bush sat down with Van Susteren to elaborate on what he wrote about Graham's influence on his life in his book, Decision Points.

"He's a gentle soul. I mean, here's one of the most famous people in the world, and in his presence, you realize how humble he is," Bush said, "and his humility, and obviously, his love for God and Christ can overwhelm the cynic, and I was a cynical person at the time, and his spirit overwhelmed me."

Graham, a Kennebunkport, was able to lead Bush from being a man full of questions to one with some peace about God.

"I mean, one way, from a kind of biblical analogy, he was — started to help me plant seeds, and the ground was — the ground was pretty hard," Bush said, "but after meeting Billy, the ground became more fertile for the seed, is one way to put it."

"No, he helped change my life. He truly did and I was a questioning person. I was drinking a lot and religion was — you know, I used to — I put in the book, 'I would listen but never hear,' and Billy Graham helped me understand the redemptive power of a risen Lord."

More than 1,000 people lined up outside the Billy Graham Library Monday to meet the Bushes, and Graham joined them briefly to receive the first signed copies of their books that day.

Franklin Graham gave the former president and first lady a private tour of the library and later said his father's mind is as strong as it has been in the past few years.

"His mind is sharper today than it was five years ago," Franklin Graham said. "I don't know what it is. He is getting better. He is getting stronger."

JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. **Ackerman Church**, Ackerman, will host The Chuck Wagon Gang on Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. The Joyful Noise Quartet will open for them at 6:30 p.m.
2. **Hopewell Church**, Crystal Springs, will host The Singing Echoes of Cleveland, Tenn., at 10:30 a.m. on January 9. Contact: Shirley Bufkin (601) 892-6093.
3. The School of Church Music and Worship at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., will host a reunion of students and faculty from 1949 to the present, on July 11-12, 2011, on the Louisville campus. For more information, contact Phillip Landgrave at 3612 Foxglove Lane, Louisville, Ky. 40241. E-mail: gloria-landgrave@bellsouth.net. Telephone: (502) 425-5943.

MS PORTIONS

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OCEAN Spring, MS is seeking to fill the full-time position of Student and Adult Discipleship Minister. Send resumes or inquiries to fbcoas@bcoas.org or mail to First Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, 602 Washington Ave., Ocean Springs, MS 39564. The Church phone number is call 228-875-4532.

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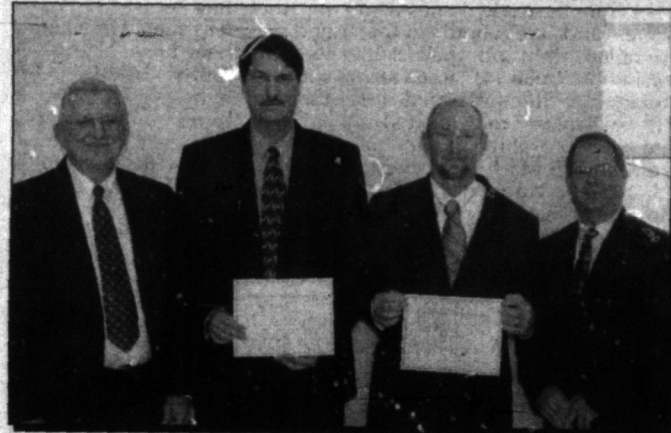
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. McAdams Church, Attala Association



2. Tomnolen Church, Webster Association



3. Grace United Church, Decatur



4. First Church, Potts Camp



1. McAdams Church, Attala Association, ordained two new deacons. Pictured are (front left) James Young, pastor; Jan Deason; Raymond "Ed" Granger; and Steve Jordan, Attala Association missions director.

2. Tomnolen Church, Webster Association, held Senior Deacon Recognition Day on Nov. 14. Pictured are (from left) Marion and Jeanie McCain, Davis and Jimmie Morgan, and Joe and Betty Bailey.

3. Grace United Church, Decatur, held its Christmas cantata, *Glory in the Highest - A new Hallelujah*, directed by music minister Daniel McNeil, on December 19. Pictured are participants.

4. First Church, Potts Camp, Girls in Action visited Trinity Mission Health and Rehabilitation in Holly Springs on Dec. 8. The girls handed out Christmas cards and candy canes to the residents. Pictured are participants.

5. Tremont Church, Itawamba Association, recently held a pastor installation service. Pictured are transitional pastor Ken Anderson (left) and wife Judy (second from left), and new pastor Matthew Russell (right) and wife Marley (second from right).

6. Shiloh Church, Big Creek, recently recorded a new record for the children's program, which focuses on Bible study, missions, and music. Pictured are participants. Johnny Hearn is pastor.

7. First Church, Jackson, recently held the Thankful Christmas program featuring the Reflections Choir. Morris Currie is pictured performing the Eddie Arnold tune, *Christmas Can't Be Far Away*, with the Reflections Choir in the background. Led by Eva Hart, the annual event is held especially for homebound individuals in central Mississippi.

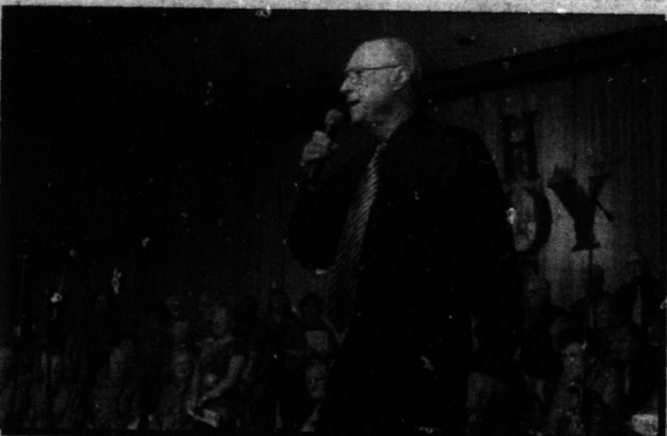
8. Topeka Church, Jayess, and Tilton United Methodist Church, Jayess, joined together for their Christmas cantata, directed by Justin Smith. Pictured are participants.



5. Tremont Church, Itawamba Association



6. Shiloh Church, Big Creek



7. First Church, Jackson



8. Topeka Church, Jayess

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE A Lifestyle of Humility

Luke 14:1-11; John 13:1-17; Philippians 2:1-11

By Becky Brown

We always lose when we make the mistake of comparing ourselves with other human beings. Either we conclude that they are better than we are and implode in despair or we conclude that we are better than they are and explode with pride. Those who walk a lifestyle of humility are not concerned about losing or winning. They are intent on looking for ways of helping others succeed.

The Apostle Paul made sure that his loved ones in Philippi knew how to sing in unison from the same sheet of music. In chapter two of the love letter to his Philippian friends, Paul brings them (and us) to a moment of personal identification. We reveal our actual humility quotient when we use the life of Jesus as our

example of how to live and love and treat others. When we compare ourselves with the beauty and the glory of the humility of Jesus, we are immediately aware of our cavernous shortfall. Those who keep their eyes on the cross will never compare themselves to anyone except Jesus. In other words, humble people are "cross-eyed." Be assured, their "Not-I-But Others" condition has nothing to do with ophthalmology.

Paul was sharing with his readers the time-tested, eternity-proven four-part recipe for making the glue called humility. He basically told them to stick together, to stick up for each other, to stick to the point and the purpose and to stick around. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His apostles to share their witness to the uttermost parts of



Brown

their world. Little did they realize that their work would begin in the "guttermost" parts of Jerusalem. Selfless people are willing to begin at the place called "Others-most." Can you even imagine what would happen if our churches were actually filled with "others-most" folks??? Jesus died for this!!!

In the third gospel in the New Testament, Doctor Luke provided us with this quote from the lips of Jesus: "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." These blood red words found in Luke 14: 11 should be acknowledged as Jesus' instructions on how to develop "HIM-mility." His audience of puffed-up Pharisees never seemed to get His message. The lowest they ever stooped in response to the ministry of Jesus was to stand at the foot of His bloody cross.

Jesus was their (and our) example for the lifestyle of

humility (Philippians 2). Jesus drew the line of demarcation which separated the humble ones from the exalted ones who were (and are about to be) humbled right off their self-exaltation (Luke 14). Jesus also personally demonstrated for His disciples (and for us) a most memorable picture of humility. In Mark 14:13 and in Luke 22:10, we read details of how the disciples were to locate and make Passover reservations for the Upper Room. Jesus told them to go into the city of Jerusalem and to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to ask for the room and make preparations for the evening meal.

The gospel of John describes the events surrounding Jesus' last supper with them before His crucifixion. John 13 says that while the twelve disciples were enjoying their meal, Jesus slipped away from the table. He rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments. He picked up a towel and prepared Himself for the task. He poured water into the basin

and began to wash their feet with the water and dry them with the towel. He was not asking that they return the favor and wash His feet. He wanted to show them how they could show humility to others by their willingness to serve. Two things have always touched me about this story. First, Jesus sent the man with the pitcher of water in advance. He planned to wash feet. He knew He would need water. Humility must be intentional. Second, Jesus washed twenty-four feet that evening. A few hours later, two of those feet would betray Him. The other twenty-two feet forsook Him and fled. Humility doesn't come easy. I've always thought about the fact that the last sight Judas had on earth was to look downward at his own clean feet as he hung himself. God's grace alone lifts us out of our pride and despair and helps us to be willing to kneel at that basin and reach for that towel.

Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE A Hill On Which To Stand

1 Kings 18:20-21, 37-39; 19:1-3a, 13b-18, 16-18

By Dr. W. Wayne VanHorn

This week's lesson is a tale of two mountains. Decisive issues were settled on each mountain. The action on both mountains centered on the prophet Elijah and upon his faith in the Lord. Elijah had to decide whether to take a bold stand for the Lord in the midst of overwhelming odds and also in the midst of deep personal doubt. This lesson encourages us to stand boldly for the Lord amid pressures to conform to the world.

Two of Elijah's biggest enemies were King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Ahab was one of the most evil kings of Israel, the northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:30). He continued the sins of Israel's first king, Jeroboam, by maintaining the rival shrines in Dan and Bethel, encouraging the Israelites to worship golden calves there,

instead of obeying the Lord and going to Jerusalem. Ahab maintained the sinful policies of appointing non-Levites to the priesthood and of celebrating feasts on dates contrary to the Lord's command. If all these things were not bad enough, Ahab encouraged the worship of the false god Baal and his female consort, Asherah, the gods of his wife, Jezebel.

God called Elijah to confront Ahab and his people as they slid further into idolatry. The major confrontation occurred on our first mountain, Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 8:20). Elijah the prophet represented the Lord. Baal was represented by 450 prophets; Asherah was represented by 400 additional prophets. Keep in mind Baal and Asherah were false gods. Elijah had to take a bold stand in the face of overwhelming



VanHorn

odds, 850 to one. However, the "one" was backed by the One True God, making the one greater than the 850. Elijah put the matter in sharp relief by asking the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21; NIV). The word "waver" derives from the Hebrew verb "to limp." Whenever we try to serve the Lord and other things, we develop a spiritual limp, hobbling between our faith in God and our desire for earthly possessions. The matter was quite simple. The people were challenged to follow whichever God/god proved to be true. The command to "follow" literally means "to walk behind" or "to walk after."

When push came to shove, only Yahweh showed up! Baal and Asherah were "no-shows." Yahweh's fire fell and consumed the altar, wood, dust, and water. Elijah had poured

on everything (1 Kings 8:37-38). The divine intervention was dramatic. The people fell on their faces proclaiming, "Yahweh, He is God! Yahweh, He is God!" (1 Kings 8:39). On the first mountain, Yahweh proved faithful and Elijah was vindicated. The drought ended when Yahweh, not Baal, provided rain.

When Jezebel heard about Elijah having the 850 prophets killed, she promised to kill him. Elijah fled in fear (1 Kings 19:1-3a). The victory on Mt. Carmel evaporated in the heat of imminent doom. Elijah ran all the way to our second mountain, Mt. Horeb, the mountain of God. On this second mountain, Elijah faced perhaps his greatest enemy, self-doubt. There and then, Yahweh, the victor of Mt. Carmel, spoke to Elijah one-on-one in "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12b; KJV). The Lord asked Elijah, "What are you doing here?" Elijah proclaimed his faithfulness to the Lord in spite of the fact that everyone else had abandoned Him (1 Kings 19:14). The Lord commissioned Elijah to anoint

Hazael king over Aram, Jehu as king over Israel, and Elisha as his replacement. These men would each play a role in destroying the infrastructure of Baalism (1 Kings 19:15-17). God responded to Elijah's deep personal doubt by reassigning him. Engagement in a worthy cause often cures our bouts with doubt. Yahweh told Elijah one last thing. He reminded Elijah He had 7,000 people in Israel, who had neither bowed their knees to Baal or kissed his image (1 Kings 19:18). Whenever we reach the point of thinking we are the only ones still faithful to the Lord, our self pity becomes a hindrance to ministry. Often the Lord will anoint someone else to take our place. On our second mountain, Mt. Horeb, the Lord proved Himself faithful as He had done on Mt. Carmel. In this tale of two mountains, we have learned the hill on which to stand is the hill of faith.

Van Horn is Dean of Christian Studies and the Arts at Mississippi College.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

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News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

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Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.

